

MAY THE FORCE BE WITH YOU

CELEBRATIONS

DISCOVERING THE MAGIC OF WALT DISNEY WORLD



Star Wars is a phenomenon. When it blasted onto the silver screen in 1977, it became a part of the world psyche faster and easier than shooting Womp Rats in Beggar's Canyon back home. Even with the conclusion of the film series, Star Wars remains relevant and is constantly referenced in the media, movies, and even politics. Most important for us, Star Wars takes over Disney's Hollywood Studios for several weekends each summer for a Jabba-sized party. What can you experience at Star Wars Weekends? Let's take a look. A long time ago in a Disney Studio far, far away...

EPISODE I

THE FANDOM MENACE



Photo ©Disney

Star Wars fans come in all shapes and sizes, senior citizens and children, bankers, bakers, and lightsaber makers. They all share in the one thing that may be more powerful than the force: a passionate love of Star Wars. While most of the world would frown on a dentist wearing a Stormtrooper outfit while performing a root canal, Star Wars Weekends has created the perfect place for Star Wars fans to feel comfortable dressing up and acting out.

As you roam around Disney's Hollywood Studios, you'll see fans dressed in expensive replica costumes and even homemade designs. You might find yourself challenging Greedo to a round of Toy Story Mania! (And it won't matter who shoots first.) However, the majority of fans are not wearing any Star Wars gear at all. They're the regular people roaming around wearing Mickey Mouse T-shirts. One of the most exciting elements of Star Wars Weekends is created by these fans. While standing in a queue, you can strike up a conversation about your history with Star Wars, and they will gladly share theirs. It's amazing how a group of films has created so many memories for people the world over.

EPISODE II

ATTACK OF THE CLONES



Photo ©Disney

Upon arrival at the Studios, it's apparent who is in charge. A regiment of Stormtroopers and Clone Troopers are monitoring the front gate and scattered throughout the park. They accomplish two things. First, they keep an eye out for rebels who might take the opportunity to overcome and destroy the empire. But more important, they set the tone for the day.

Be sure to be at the Studios prior to the opening. Before the gates are opened, troopers commandeer the turnstiles from up above and begin their guard duty. It's suddenly apparent to Guests that they are about to enter a Star Wars world. It will be a celebratory one as the troopers interact with each other and with Guests in a hysterical way that is not to be missed. Throughout the day, these troopers are everywhere, and they quite often provide preshow entertainment for live performances. Their presence provides a strange sense of security as well...

If you've ever been to a working studio, it's possible that you've run into a celebrity or two. Star Wars Week-ends at Disney's Hollywood Studios really jumps that up several notches. Star Wars celebrities are easily visible throughout the weekend. If you're a bit more ambitious, you might even get to speak with them and get their autographs.

A daily motorcade runs the parade route at the Studios. The motorcade travels to John Williams's immediately recognizable music of Star Wars, a symphony of adventure and intrigue. Here you will see hundreds of costumed characters from Jawas to Jedis, Sand People to Sith, and even Emperors to Apprentices. You can also see some favorite Disney characters in their Star Wars costumes! Stormtrooper Donald and Darth Vader Goofy are not to be missed. The motorcade culminates in the introduction of that day's celebrity guests, each in their own vehicle. In previous years, we've seen stars such as Temuera Morrison (bounty hunter Jango Fett), Jake Lloyd (Young Anakin), Peter Mayhew (Chewbacca), David Prowse (Darth Vader), Warwick Davis (Wicket the Ewok), and Anthony Daniels (C-3PO).

Once per day in the newly enclosed and air-conditioned Premiere Theater, the celebrities participate in a talk show, "Stars of the Saga." It's a revealing production featuring a Q&A section, behind-the-scenes films, and several surprises that are sure to invigorate the Star Wars fan inside.

If watching celebrities from the parade route or from theater seats isn't your cup of blue milk, consider picking up a FASTPASS to meet and greet with the stars. You'll have an opportunity to talk with them, snap photographs, and get autographs in a much more personal manner. This is a very popular option, and it will often require a lot of time waiting in a line devoted to one star. But how often can you have an audience with the real Darth Vader—and live to tell about it?



Photos ©Disney

EPISODE III

REVENGE OF THE STARS

EPISODE IV

A NEW SHOW



Photo ©Disney

In addition to the “Stars of the Saga” show, other stage shows and events are well worth attending. In previous years, the people from Lucasfilm have put on a show introducing a new or upcoming project. In 2008, they introduced their computer animated feature *The Clone Wars* with a backstage and behind-the-scenes look. It was an interesting examination, studying the journey from computer to the big screen. The showing I attended was hosted by Dave Filoni, one of the film’s directors. The subject of each show varies from year to year.

For the younger Padawans in the group, the ever popular Jedi Training Academy is still recruiting in an entertaining interactive show. However, it’s the evening finale on that Academy stage that is not to be missed. The Hyperspace Hoopla is a casual, party style event that is sure to remind you of the fun side of Star Wars as well as the reason we visit Disney parks.

EPISODE V ATMOSPHERE STRIKES BACK

Add everything together, and something magical happens: The Studios take on a new atmosphere. Darth Maul can size up a guest like a leopard to its prey, and it doesn't seem out of place. Walk in front of the commissary, and you'll see the cantina band in action. Actually, it seems like half of the park is dominated by that Star Wars atmosphere.

Photo opportunities are scattered throughout. Picture yourself on a speeder bike on Endor, bursting through the doors of the Tantive IV, or hanging in a giant, plastic "Star Wars Figure" case. You'll pass by Tusken Raiders and Wookiees. This is also the perfect time to figure out if your friend is indeed taller than a Jawa. The exterior of Star Tours is ripe with great photo opportunities as well, even though it's in no way exclusive to Star Wars Weekends. Where else but in Disney's Hollywood Studios could you take pictures in the tall trees of Endor or under the foot of an approaching AT-AT walker?

This Star Wars atmosphere is great fun for fans of all ages. Now if only we had some way of commemorating the event...





Photos ©Tim Devine



Our Star Wars Weekend Saga comes to an end with the most expensive, most dangerous episode of them all! Yes, I have gotten through all five of the previous episodes without dropping several hundred Galactic Credits. But this is Disney and Star Wars working together, so I'm sure to struggle when I see what's for sale. The Studios offers a healthy offering of regular Star Wars and Disney merchandise throughout the parks, plus it has a large amount of limited edition merchandise that is sure to have some people quickly restructuring their monthly expenditures.

Limited edition collector pins and watches are only the beginning, each one carefully crafted with the collector in mind. Where I personally get into trouble is the Star Wars Big Fig collection, with their balanced mixture of Star Wars and Disney. My eyes bug out like a Mon Calamari pilot when I look at them. Last year's Donald as Darth Maul and this year's Donald in Carbonite will soon be sharing space atop my television.

Of course, other products are available as well, including clothing for all ages, artwork and photographs, and collector-caliber lightsabers.

For the Disney enthusiast, one of the other fascinating aspects of the Star Wars Weekend retail is that the selling point, Wicket's Warehouse, is located in what used to be one of the soundstages used on the original backlot tour. Last year, I was not the only one taking photographs of barren walls, stairwells, and one-way windows. After it was all said and done, I spent more than I had budgeted and was immediately relieved that Star Wars Weekends only happens for four consecutive weekends a year.

Star Wars Weekends speak to so many people in so many different ways. If you are lucky enough to attend, check online resources for scheduled events and times because they differ from day to day and year to year. Also be aware that it can be hot as a Tatooine desert during the Florida summer. Dress appropriately, remain fully hydrated, bring enough film or camera memory, and most important...may the force be with you!

EPISODE VI

THE RETAIL OF THE JEDI

THE FORCE IS STRONG WITH THIS ONE...

In the time of year when Star Wars Weekends are here, it's only appropriate to examine the complex and interesting relationship between George Lucas and Walt Disney World. After achieving unparalleled success with his Star Wars films, Lucas resides over an Empire. Quite often, Lucas is compared with Walt Disney because they both sought to change how entertainment is delivered and appreciated. When the creator of Star Wars gets involved with Disney, remarkable things happen.

Star Tours: The most obvious connection between Lucas and Disney is the simulator attraction that takes travelers light speed to the moon of Endor. Star Tours very successfully places participants inside that galaxy far, far away. After returning from your flight, you enter Tatooine Traders (formerly Endor Vendors), which is a store devoted solely to Star Wars-related merchandise.

Indiana Jones Epic Stunt Spectacular: Just north of Star Tours is an attraction based on Lucas's other monumentally successful film series: the Indiana Jones Adventures. This warhorse at the Studios transformed the studio theme park "stunt show" into the world of our favorite bullwhip-cracking archeologist. If you're lucky, you might be picked to participate in the danger! After leaving the theater, you can visit the Indiana Jones Adventure Outpost, where adventure-themed merchandise is all the rage.

Body Wars: Over in Epcot's Future World was a simulator attraction inside the Wonders of Life Pavilion. Identical in technology and execution to Star Tours, Body Wars took you through the process of miniaturization and injection into a human body. This fantastic voyage was directed by Leonard Nimoy, and it starred Oscar-nominated Elisabeth Shue. Lucas's Industrial Light and Magic created the computer special effects.

Captain EO: Across Future World inside the Journey



into Imagination Pavilion came another space age departure for Lucas. He acted as executive producer and wrote the story for this 3-D film starring Michael Jackson and Anjelica Huston. Adding to the star power, the film was directed by Francis Ford Coppola of the Godfather films.

ExtraTERRORestrial Alien Encounter: Lucas teamed up with Walt Disney Imagineering again for this terrifying update of Mission to Mars. It included state-of-the-art aural effects and audio-animatronics. The attraction was soon revised to tone down the scary factor, but it never became a family attraction. Thus it became vulnerable to a takeover by Stitch, who now lives in its location.

Pixar: Even more important but less obvious is Lucas's involvement in the creation of Pixar, which has obvious connections throughout the parks at this point.

But will we have a Lucasland in the Studios one day? It is possible. Many fans have clamored for Disneyland's Indiana Jones Adventure to journey to this coast. However, that seems unlikely because that attraction and the Animal Kingdom's DINOSAUR share the same vehicles and track layout, which would be obvious if it was added as is to Walt Disney World.



Enjoy the magic of
Walt Disney World
all year long with
Celebrations
magazine!

Receive 6 issues for
\$29.99* (save more than
15% off the cover price!)

*U.S. residents only. To order outside the United States, please visit www.celebrationspress.com.

To subscribe to Celebrations magazine, clip or copy the coupon below.



YES!

Please send me 6 issues of
Celebrations magazine

Send check or money order for \$29.99 to:
Celebrations Press
PO Box 584
Uwchland, PA 19480

Name

Confirmation email address

Address

City

State

Zip

You can also subscribe online at www.celebrationspress.com.